

Provincial Council Meeting, Autumn 2024

Online

Thursday 14th November, 2024



Attendees: Theresa Gallagher (Cathaoirleach), Patrick Ballantyne (Runai), Michael Fitzgerald (Cisteoir), John Goulding (P.R.O), Mick Nixon (Auditor), Mairi Docherty (Youth Officer), Calum McGregor (Youth Officer), Rosemarie Cassidy (St Patrick's), Yvonne Morris (St Patrick's), Patrick Gallagher (St Wilfrid's), Marianne McAleer (Amairgin the Gael), Fabian Greening (Ayr), Moira Callaghan (Auditor), Michelle Hemmingway (Tara O'Carolan), Julie O'Hare (Ashton in Makerfield), Paul McHugh (Ayr), David Browne (Leas Cathaoirleach).

Staff: Paddy Callaghan, Erin Brown.

Apologies: Carmel Burke (Coventry), John Burke (Coventry), Elske Simpson (Staff), Kathleen Collins (Cambridge).

Votes of Sympathy: Eamon Nugent, Louise Boyle, Tommy Kelly, Florence Travers, Mary Doolin, Ellen Wilson, Patrick Eddleson, Mary Hughes, Kevin Finnigan, Mary and Charlie Cassidy.

ACTION POINTS

Item	Who
Audited accounts & Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine 2024 round-up	PC, MF, PB
Reminder about committee contact information	PB
Circulate easy fundraising information and SCT webinar information	EB, PB
Suggestions of discussion topics at Convention 2025	all

MINUTES

1. Welcome & Introduction

Theresa welcomed everyone, and encouraged all meeting attendees to turn their cameras on.

2. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Paddy acknowledged that Calum and Moira are both family members and are on the provincial council.

3. Previous Minutes, Action Points & Matters Arising

Accounts have been audited and circulated within the provincial council. We got them audited just in time for our deadline with the charity commission. Our accounts will also be audited ahead of convention for 2025, and that model will be used going forward. Auditors have given us a guarantee that this will happen. Trustees' reports will be very similar as a result, as we have a narrower window for this set of accounts.

PB to circulate the finalised set of outcomes from Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine 2024 as an outcome from this meeting, alongside the audited provincial accounts that were mentioned earlier.

TTCT info: Elske has secured the money for this, and information is going to be coming out as soon as we have it. There will be a scholarship going forward for people from Britain to go on this course. We need to know when Dublin plans to run the TTCT, which will help us to plan our own shortlisting process; we are particularly keen to get some good candidates for this.

JG is basically complete with his work on the social media contacts. He will send these to the staff team and they can log these. Scotland is missing a couple of answers, but JG is confident he is nearly over the line. Theresa thanked JG for his efforts.

Proposed: Mairi Docherty, Seconded: Michael Fitzgerald.

4. Relevant Correspondence

Info from branches RE AGM dates and committees: PB highlighted the large volume of emails from branches flagging new committees etc. Encouraged branches to give us their latest contact details for all committee members, and will circulate after this meeting to remind folk. Erin also said that this was pointed to in the branch leaders newsletter too.

5. Treasurer's Report

Key points addressed from discussion about audited accounts, and MF acknowledged new funding we have.

Banking: we have a new account nearly ready, but need to wait for an opportunity to be together in a room to fill in these details and start using the new account. This will mostly be ticked off by this weekend. All trustees are going to be signatories on the account if they want to be. Theresa reminded all branches & regions to have at least four signatories on their accounts so that there are no banking conflicts or queries.

6. Regional Reports

Scotland: no regional representative present. Meeting next week and we have motions up for a two-day regional fleadh as more entries than the provincial fleadh. A motion has been put forward to have some choice, falling on the branch that is hosting to make this decision. A couple of exchanges going on in Scotland.

Northern: Michelle flagged that they are virtually sorted with the bank accounts, signatories sent off last thursday and then the committee is good to go. Tara O'Carolan opened their account this week too with Virgin. AGM on 1st December at Brian Boru Club. Michelle went to a couple of branch AGMs that were on Zoom and said things were very positive. Theresa & Paddy went to a couple of the AGMs in Middlesbrough and Tyneside and Liverpool. Liverpool have an entirely new committee in the branch, lots of forward thinking people.

Midlands: Michael gave an update on the All Britain Fleadh 2025. Successful meeting held last week to get a committee set up, and contracts to be signed on a venue imminently. No venue announcement until this has been sorted. Michael said he's not heard much from branches recently, but flagged the upcoming regional AGM will see branches coming together. New committee in the region is impending at present.

London & Southern: John Goulding noted upcoming regional AGM. Sunday 17th November sees the friendly fleadh in North London happening again. 1st-2nd March the region is hosting the annual convention at Heathrow in London.

7. Fleadhanna updates

Regional Fleadhanna: Scottish Fleadh: last weekend in April, and could be 1-2 days long, but will be hosted by St James the Great. Northern Fleadh - hosted by Leeds on the 17th May, venue tbc. Midlands: 6th April at Newman University in Birmingham. London: date tbc by JG, but hosted by North London branch.

Music Sub-Committee: Theresa flagged that this weekend will see an adjudicator seminar in Carmel College, St Helens. Number of music sub-committee in Scottish region standing down. Theresa said she is looking forward to new blood getting involved.

Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine 2025: Theresa reiterated that we are not announcing the venue formally, but have been down to see it and it is very suitable. Lots of space, car parking and lots of potential as a Fleadh venue. Paddy flagged that the minutes showed that the Fleadh was going to be in a school in Birmingham, but we can confirm it will not be in the school. Theresa gave a brief outline of why the school in Birmingham was ruled out for next year's All Britain Fleadh.

8. Staffing and Projects reports

Erin introduced Elske's project bids to Garfield Western and National Lottery Heritage Fund, and looked at the 3-year strategy plan. Elske is very busy!

Continuing with two monthly newsletters, and a number of blogs highlighting Vince Jordan's journey and the recent storytelling workshop in Leicester. A really good inter-generational afternoon.

New branch in Edinburgh and an accompanying blog about that. Erin encouraged everyone to read and write blogs. Asked if Marianne McAleer would consider writing a blog about her experience of singing over the years.

Fundraising: on the lookout for grants to apply for, but some are tricky to apply for as a national organisation. Really worth branches looking into local funding. Irish set dancing lessons are considered on the UNESCO list now, so there will be plenty of project funding around this. Theresa flagged that there are lots of people interested in set dancing up and down the country, so can we put this out on social media to garner some interest. Big group in Basingstoke, and Erin is having chats with them.

Easy fundraising: this has been set up for a long time, if in the lead up to Christmas people can sign up to it. Lots of shops (Booking.com, Irish ferries) will give us a percentage of whatever you have spent with them, so in the lead up to Christmas it would be great.

Learn to Play Day: in October, Cambridge did a Learn to Play Day and it was overwhelmingly successful and have recruited 9 new families into the branch as a result of this. The trustee of the Learn the Play Day charity was very impressed with the teaching in the branch, and the intergenerational aspect of teaching. Nottingham have also had a very

successful outcome of this with 10 new members. Free advertising and a 2 hour session, with classes and lots of networking.

Erin went to a networking event for folk educators. Met someone from the Sheffield Music Hub, and many people will be aware that these hubs have seen a lots of reshuffling over the last few years, with funding cuts etc. Erin sees this as an opportunity for us to reach out and get in touch with these hubs to engage. Often these hubs own their own premises and event programmes, so we definitely should be encouraging people to engage with this.

Marianne asked a question about Easy Fundraising companies - Paddy shared a link to this and it seems that there are over 7,000 companies registered on this. You can download a browser extension which will flag if your transaction is eligible for a donation to Comhaltas in Britain - it's free money.

Rosemarie Cassidy queried if the 12 days event is still going to be happening. Paddy and Erin said they will help, but haven't got this far yet.

9. Safeguarding Update

Two different systems in Comhaltas in Britain - Scottish and English/Welsh. An organisation called Aaron's Department, and Erin and Paddy have been doing due diligence on the company. Through this company, we can process DBS enhanced checks for £10.95 plus VAT, and their platform enables us to keep a track of who is signed up to this scheme. Paddy said it also enables us to carry out checks on people who may or may not need updates. For paid teachers it's around £30.00 which is as cheap as it is elsewhere, where the 10.95 price is for volunteers. This framework also allows us to use their training materials, which are also excellent and extremely affordable.

The law is changing in Scotland regarding PVG checks, and these will become mandatory soon, eliminating any 'grey' areas as it will be the law. We can process checks for volunteers and paid teachers for a fee in Scotland.

Theresa queried status of safeguarding policy update. This needs to happen before the 1st April, so convention would be an ideal time to approve it. Paddy said we need to discuss whether we make it mandatory for branches to use this new framework we have from Aaron's Department; advisable but we definitely need to discuss it further before integrating within policy.

10. SCT update

Erin briefly introduced the SCT that we have and are OFQUAL accredited. Paddy and Erin have met with Majella to come up with some FAQs. This is only once per year, applications

are in January, and then exams take place between April and June. Britain will not see that, so there will be online exams. Applications are now open, but Erin has flagged a few technical difficulties that have been passed back to Dublin.

The presentation delivered by Majella was fantastic at the Convention. Majella has offered to do a webinar in DEcember, and invite teachers to come along to learn more about the SCT syllabus. Thursday 12th December is likely to be this date. Erin encouraged us to go back to branches and teachers and talk through this opportunity.

11. Convention 2025

Theresa asked what people want to see at the Convention this year. There are lots of online things to do with committee role training, whether we want to look at our three year plan, set-dancing. Feel free to send us an email with some ideas if you have them, whatever you all think will be beneficial we will try to coordinate.

Convention will be in the Hilton by Heathrow Terminal 5; we need to get our accommodation sorted. Paddy said the price is based on £109 per room, but waiting on final numbers before releasing it as public information.

Ards CCÉ want to come and present their bid for the All Ireland Fleadh next year.

Patrick discussed his idea for formalisation of a twinning programme for branches. Twin branches in the UK with each other, and encourage them to learn from each other and make friends/community. Rosemarie said this is a good idea.

Rosemarie also flagged interest in community involvement and fundraising from branches around the country. This could help to galvanise interest and friendship between the branches.

Encouraged everyone to email Patrick Ballantyne with ideas.

12. AOB

None raised.

13. Next Meeting

Convention in March is the next formal meeting of the Provincial Council. Information will be coming out soon, and Theresa encouraged everyone to try and attend, and source funding.

Theresa thanked everyone for coming, meeting closed at 21:10PM.